

Noise and your health

Noise harms more than our ears.

Noise is a serious environmental and health hazard. Studies have correlated noise with physiological changes in sleep, blood pressure and digestion. Excess noise is a leading quality of life issue in communities across the nation.

Noise and sleep. Noise is one of the most common sleep disturbances, and when sleep disruption becomes chronic, adverse health effects are increased. The EPA recommends a day-night indoor average sound level of 45 decibels, and a night-time average level of 35 decibels to protect against sleep disturbance. A refrigerator is about 50 decibels.

Noise and cardiovascular changes.

Studies show that exposure to noise is associated with elevations in blood pressure. One study found a correlation between noise disturbance and adverse cardiovascular effects.

Noise and gastrointestinal changes.

Studies have linked noise exposure with increased gastric emptying, peristaltic esophageal contraction, and anxiety. Another study found increased use of antacids, hypnotics, sedatives, and antihypertensives in noisy communities.

Noise and mental health. Most of us recognize the stress caused by unwanted sound. Studies have found noise to be associated with increased aggression and less helpful behavior.

Governing noise

Noise disturbances are defined and controlled by County law and City ordinances.

Prince George's County restricts noise in residential areas audible more than 50 feet from its source. County noise restrictions are in effect 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Violations are punishable by \$250 fine for a first offense and \$500 for subsequent offenses or imprisonment for up to 30 days.

City of College Park's noise ordinance states that:

"Unless it is for the purpose of necessary property maintenance during the day, it is unlawful... to make or generate loud or raucous sound on said property, or to permit any loud or raucous sound to be made or generated on said property, so as to cause unreasonable annoyance or disturbance to others living or located nearby".

Unlike the County law, the City noise ordinance is in effect at all times. The City ordinance is violated when the noise

level exceeds 65 decibels between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m., or 55 decibels between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m., or when two or more residents are disturbed by the noise.

Violations of the City ordinance are punishable by a fine of \$500 for a first offense and \$1,000 for the second offense within a six-month period. If a rental property is cited for three noise violations within a twelve-month period, the City may seek revocation of its use and occupancy permit.

What to do about noise

Call the code enforcement officer, on duty late spring and early fall on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 6 p.m. to 4 a.m. at 301-864-8877 (daytime), and at 301-275-2466 (night).

The City's code enforcement officer may take a decibel reading, and if warranted, issue a municipal infraction which will be sent to the household by mail.

The officer is not permitted to intervene with the noise-makers at the time of the disturbance. However, citations are often effective in preventing repeat noise violations, and police are notified of major incidents.

Call the County Police (301-333-4000)

This is often best for prompt action. The police dispatcher will send an available officer to the scene, who may ask noise-makers to comply with the law.

Call the U.M. Police (301-405-3555)

The Univ. of Maryland Police do not have primary jurisdiction off campus, but if the noise disturbance is occurring on U.M. campus or affiliated property (fraternities, etc.), you should call them.

File a noise complaint (301-864-8877)

If two or more City residents file a written complaint for a specific noise disturbance, the Noise Control Board will hold a hearing. Complaints should be sent to the College Park Noise Control Board at 4500 Knox Road within 15 days after the event.

Hints for effective action

✓ Get to know your neighbors

Problems can often be solved by politely asking neighbors to turn down the volume or to take the party inside. Neighbors with good relationships are more likely to compromise when problems arise.

However, if this approach fails, you may need to take appropriate action:

✓ Call the noise hotline

Call during regular business hours or leave a message on the Noise Hotline at other times, so the City will know about your problem. A code enforcement officer isn't on night duty year-round because noise problems tend to occur on weekend evenings in spring and fall.

✓ Call police and code enforcement

It may seem like one call too many, but calling both numbers will get the attention and assistance of both City and County enforcement efforts.

✓ Record detailed information

Your complaint will be more effective if you can accurately identify where the noise is coming from, including the address as well as the date, time, and nature of the noise.

✓ Request a police visit

When calling the police, it is a good idea to ask that the officer also stop by your home so that you know when they came and can ask what actions were taken.

✓ Get support of your neighbors

When more than one person calls to complain about a particular disturbance, the police and the City will take the complaint more seriously and work harder to solve the problem.

Noise In Our Community ?



**We Can All Enjoy Ourselves
If We Work Together**



This brochure was prepared for College Park Residents as a volunteer project of the Committee For A Better Environment (CBE).

For information about CBE and our activities, please visit www.ci.college-park.md.us or call the City Clerk at 301-864-8666.

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